Ephraem The Syrian | Koinonia House

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In recent years, many opponents of the pre-tribulation rapture view have made dogmatic assertions that this view was never taught before 1820 AD There have been attempts to attribute the origin of this view to John N. Darby.

Grant Jeffrey has found an ancient citation from a sermon ascribed to Ephraem of Nisibis (306-373 AD), which clearly teaches that believers will be raptured and taken to Heaven before The Tribulation.

Ephraem of Nisibis was the most important and prolific of the Syrian church fathers and a witness to early Christianity on the fringes of the Roman Empire in the late fourth century.

He was well-known for his poetry, exegetical and theological writings, and many of the hymns of the early Byzantine church. So popular were his works that in the fifth and sixth centuries he was adopted by several Christian communities as a spiritual leader and role model.

This sermon is deemed to be one of the most interesting apocalyptic texts of the early Middle Ages. The translation of the sermon includes the following segment:

> "For all the saints and Elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins."

This text was originally a sermon called On the Last Times, the Anti-christ, and the End of the World. There are four existing Latin manuscripts (the Parisinus, the Augiensis, the Barberini, and the St. Gallen) ascribed to St. Ephraem or to St. Isidore . Some scholars believe this text was written by some unknown writer in the sixth century and was derived from the original Ephraem.

The sermon describes the events of the last days, beginning with the rapture, the Great Tribulation of 3 1/2 years duration under the Antichrist's rule, followed by

the Second Coming of Christ. In Ephraem's book **The Book of the Cave of Treasures**, written about 370 AD, he expressed his belief that the 69th week of Daniel ended with the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus the Messiah.

This, of course, doesn't prove that the pre-tribulation view is correct; only that it was held (by some) in the early centuries and was not unique to the revival of the 1830's. It simply documents that this view was held by a remnant of the faithful from the beginning until today.

The validity of any view can only be measured by the Biblical text itself. For a more complete discussion of these issues, see our study, *From Here to Eternity*.

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